

**PLANNING BOARD  
JANUARY 21, 2016  
MINUTES**

Chairman Perkins called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM at the Town Hall

Members present: Perkins, Barringer, Burke, Giger, Vega and Wilson

Member absent: Svarczkopf

**PRE-SUBMISSION REVIEW – INDIAN HILL MUSIC**

The Board met with representatives of Indian Hill Music including project manager Gary Shepherd, design engineers Larry Beals and Todd Morey of Beals Associates, and landscape architect Greg Tuzzolo of Stephen Stimpson Associates. Chairman Perkins read the guidelines for pre-submission review.

Mr. Shepherd said Indian Hill Music purchased approximately 110 acres on Old Ayer Road from Thomas More College and Andrew Rosenberger in 2015 for its new music school and concert hall. The project architect is Alan Joslin of Epstein Joslin Architects, Inc. of Cambridge, designer of many concert halls throughout the world.

Mr. Beals said they are in the early stages of site design. The property, located at the intersection of Old Ayer Road and Peabody Street, slopes down to the north portion of the site on Peabody Street. The two properties (30 and 40 acres each), formerly owned by Rosenberger, on both sides of Old Ayer Road are protected by an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR).

Member Wilson asked if the APR's would remain. Mr. Shepherd said Indian Hill Music intends to honor the APR and hopes to reestablish some productive use of the land. Mr. Beals said the site to be developed is the useable land, not the land subject to the APR.

Mr. Beals showed the Board the MassGIS aerial view of the site with the wetlands shown on both sides of the property. James Brook, with a 100-year floodplain, is located on the easterly side of Old Ayer Road. Member Burke asked if James Brook is subject to the Rivers Protection Act. Mr. Beals said the brook was dry during the summer, but they will file an Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD) with the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Beals said the north-south orientation of the property will work well with the concert hall at the top of the hill. Low Impact Development (LID) drainage techniques will be used. Overflow parking will be on "green-banked" grass surfaces for occasional use. The existing stables and riding rink will remain, perhaps for an indoor performance center and "festival meadow" for outdoor use.

Member Giger asked if pervious pavement would be used as part of the LID system. Mr. Beals said the jury is still out and they have not decided yet.

Member Wilson said this is a wonderful plan. He asked about the design of the concert hall and classrooms. Mr. Shepherd said architect Alan Joslin will describe the buildings at a future meeting. The architectural plans are still very conceptual. The performance center will accommodate 1200 people with lawn seating. The music school and site will be designed for student drop-off or valet parking. All Architectural Access Board requirements will be met. They plan to use an on-site sewerage disposal system rather than connect to municipal sewer.

Chairman Perkins asked about the concert-hall building. Mr. Shepherd said it would be a "shoebox" design with a height of 60 ft for proper acoustics. The applicant may ask that the height be allowed as an education exemption or that an overlay district be created. They do not know what approach they will take at this time.

Member Burke asked about parking. Mr. Shepherd said they will have a maximum of 1200 and minimum of 500 parking spaces. They are still working out traffic flow issues with traffic engineer Gary Hebert. They are considering using an "exit only" on road onto Peabody Street for large events with the main access to the site on Old Ayer Road.

Member Vega asked about the grades at the exit. Mr. Morey said the grade will be 3-3.5% at the entrance and about 8.5% up hill.

Member Burke said he lives on Old Ayer Road, and he is very excited about the project. He asked if the traffic engineer would evaluate the intersection of Old Ayer Road and Route 119 which is very difficult now. Mr. Beals said he discussed this intersection with the Police Chief and Fire Chief. The ideal solution would be a "T" intersection. Mr. Morey added that they would like to use a series of "way-finding" signs to give people directions to the site.

Member Burke said he liked the "green-banked" parking and LID grass swales for stormwater management. He asked why they plan to use on-site sewage disposal rather than connect to the sewer system. Mr. Shepherd said the cost to tie into sewer is \$1.6 million.

Member Barringer said with approximately 700 cars and 1200 people, the lighting must be adequate for safety but minimal. Mr. Shepherd said they plan to use low cut-off fixtures, directed downward. Member Burke said the lighting should be "Dark-Sky" compliant.

Member Barringer asked about pedestrian access and bike paths. Mr. Shepherd said they would like to connect with the Town Center via the rail trail and sidewalk network.

Member Giger commented that the traffic flow with Indian Hill Music's present use of the Littleton High School for performances on Saturday and Sundays works very well and should be used as a model. Mr. Shepherd said they are doing so.

Mr. Morey described the soil testing and possible options for the on-site sewage disposal system. He said he is working with Ira Grossman of the Nashoba Associated Board of Health.

Mr. Tuzzolo described potential pedestrian connections with the rail trail and existing sidewalk network. He said they respect the residential character of the area. The setbacks will be a

minimum of 160 ft. They have no problem with "Dark Sky" requirements and will use pedestrian-scale lighting with timers. He said they will work with the Police Chief and Fire Chief to address any emergency services concerns.

Member Burke asked about the square footage of the building. Mr. Shepherd said 100,000 SF. Member Burke asked about the elevation at the foundation of the building. Mr. Tuzzolo said the building will be at 340 ft and the high point of the hill is at elevation 368 ft.

Member Burke asked about the height of the building and whether they would pursue an educational exemption or use other methods. The visual aspect of the project is very important. Mr. Shepherd said one floor of the building will be below grade.

Reporter Connie Sartini asked about the proposed demolition of the existing house and noted that there is a Rufus Porter painting in the house. She said there is a Rufus Porter museum in Bethel, Maine. Mr. Shepherd said they have requested an expert opinion on the painting.

Mr. Beals noted that they may install a helicopter landing pad for emergency use. Some Board members expressed concern about a helicopter pad at the site. Member Giger noted that there are helicopter landing areas nearby at the Nashoba Valley Medical Center and the Groton School.

Chairman Perkins thanked the applicant for the presentation and stated that this will be a great addition to the Town.

#### **PROPOSED ZONING AMENDMENTS**

The Board discussed possible zoning amendments to be presented at the 2016 Spring Town Meeting. The Board will submit an amendment to Section 218-6E Alteration and Expansion after it receives the final draft from the Non-Use Working Group and Town Counsel. The Board will also submit an article to delete Section 218-28 Development Rate Limitation.

Member Burke suggested revising major Residential Development rather than deleting it altogether. He said the Board may want to consider allowing Flexible Development by right and conventional development by special permit. The Town of Shutesbury has a similar provision. More time is needed so such an amendment would not be ready until the Fall Town Meeting. Members Burke and Wilson will serve on a subcommittee to draft the proposed amendment.

#### **MINUTES**

The Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of December 3, 2015, December 10, 2015, and December 17, 2015.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette, AICP  
Land Use Director/Town Planner